



AVAILION

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Avalon

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Special thanks to
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Cover artwork by Rick Evans

The Rights of the Kill

by Mike Prater

It was just another night. The moon hung
over the town like a watchful eye of silver,
maintaining a constant guard over the
shadows below. And the shadows accepted
this, and crept quietly around the great pools
and rivers of moonlight like momentarily
satisfied wolves, waiting for another victim or
their hunger to present itself.

Through the silvery twilight blew the wind,
constant and all knowing, passing so gently
as to barely signal its presence, and yet
touching all that choose to walk the darkness
instead of the light.

All was as it should be, another passing of
the hours of evening, another journey for the
silver goddess over her forest of diamonds
upon a veil of midnight blue velvet.

It was just another night.

I stood upon the balcony of my apartment,
feeling very much like one of the shadows that
enshrouded me with its mysterious embrace.
I had never been a day person. Things were

just too loud and frantic, the chaos hanging
over everything like a heavy net from which
there is no escape. Instead I adapted to the
quiet calm of the night. It was no secret to me
that it was my true domain, since it was only
in the darkness that I truly felt safe and alive.

I took a sip of my wine, and finished tying
my tie. The night, though beautiful, did not
last forever. There were many things I had to
accomplish upon that special evening, and I
was not accomplishing any of them by stand-
ing over the city like a starry-eyed child. The
time for action was very near.

I dreaded the moment when the calm of the
night would be split by the sounds of two of
its inhabitants in combat. War was not a part
of the night, neither was death. At least no
more than in the day. The night was a time
for mystery. There was no mystery in the stark
reality of killing another like yourself.

As I put on my jacket, tucking in the short
fighting knife deep into the breast pocket, I

wondered if it was the killing I dreaded or
the loneliness that would follow. It was the
curse of my kind that we should always
one another. Long ago I had learned to
humans out of desperation for someone
deed, anyone to remind me that there was
a dawn, though I rarely saw it. Someone
hold me when even the whispering breeze
of the night grew too cold to bear. Just
meone to love and be loved by.

I would never find such things among
own kind. We meet each other aware that
are the hunters of the sheep, and no
wolves can ever hunt the same flock and
vive. This was perhaps the truest irony, for
do not feed off of the humans amongst who
we live, but yet the instincts of our
predecessors are still strong, no matter how
unnecessary. We were killers before we knew
that killing was wrong, and killers we remain.
We are the people of the night.

My fingers tapped out Julie's number up

(continued on page 8)

Beauty in Banaras

In a flight of fancy I searched for beauty
beyond the ranges and the desert
and on, beyond the mountains
'til the warmth of India's earth
beneath my naked feet rose like a healing fire
from the golden river Ganges.
And I knew I was to see it,
see the face of beauty
in this terra cotta land
beyond the seas.



Rick Evans

I passed the temple of Vishvanath,
overtook the pilgrims on the highway,
reached the crowded market
where Moslem women spin the silk
where colors burst around the stations
and break in waves upon the merchants
white and ivory, green and yellow.
And from the distant Bay of Bengal
a breeze comes to cool the people
as they work and talk and sell their silk
as they roll and fold the stripes and sashes
of undulating silk.

An enormous sun rose sharply,
Pierced the plaza through the awnings
and traced her noble profile on my mind,
burnt and etched her perfect profile on my mind.
She held the crimson sari
held it to the copper-colored sky,
ran her fingers higher, caressed its airy texture
to show the sheer and subtle weaving
of the fine Banaras silks.

When she turned I saw her fully,
viewed her Hindu countenance
above the splendor of my fancy
above my wholly modest dream
above the brilliant blues and purples
of the other women's saris.
And the rich orange and brown colors
of her own sari faded also,
paled at her fresh and poised appearance,
paled at the energetic glory and
bronze radiance of her face.

When the sun fell I beheld her.
She moved and danced and swirled
and the oval body of the sitar
told her movements like a mirror.
And with ritualistic rhythm
and a soft and liquid language
she intoned some ancient phrases
like verses from the Gita.
Then her hand moved upon the sitar
then she whirled amid the colors
in the shimmering folds of silk.
And beauty in Banaras, beauty at its center
the beauty of her face covered and enwrapped me
then opened toward the sea.
Exultant in the beauty
and emboldened by the rapture
I siezed upon the vision
and took it all away with me.

Dr. Vernon L. Peterson

Woman

Woman I see the crosses you bear

Paint on your face, ribbons in your hair

Working so feverishly to make yourself fair

For all insensate men who don't even care.

Marcus Martin

I Almost Blundered

For years I've stood alone, with noone beside me,
Plenty of women, but noone to guide me,
Striving for something, working for what?
Giving and taking, punching the clock.
Now I see a glimmer of hope and a light,
Will you have me? You sure feel right.
And when we have travelled the road meant for us,
Will we measure our merits? Have established a trust?
How long will we last? You ask, why ponder on that?
Many will envy the level we've sat.
And when the twilight of our relationship is clear,
I hope that I will have reduced your fear.

Marcus Martin

For Once In Your Life

For once in your life, you're realizing,
You don't need to fit the molds...
Of society.

You can throw them away, all of your dreams,
Just because you believe someone won't approve...
You're being deceived.

Those little groups you see,
Do the numbers look strong?
Do they look so free?
Do you want to belong?...
I tell you you're wrong.

Success is not money,
It's enjoying yourself,
Pursue your dreams,
Put your fear on a shelf...
And like yourself.

Marcus Martin

Kwei Mei

Should I see the world through tear-stained eyes?
The prince of cups *does* claim me his prize.
"Pupil, follower, disciple, rise
I command you, listen to my lies
You were born under my control, you realize
You've always been mine, no use your cries
Within your warring soul, a battle is waged
And soon
Verily, with a gesture, I send you to an early doom."

Is that a fact? I say to thee
O so-called bearer of my destiny
I will solve any chaos you cast at me
I will find the answers, and harmonize Kwei Mei.

Marcus Martin

A Flirtatious Wink

A flirtatious wink was all it was,
He had no plans in mind.

When she came close with open hand,
He offered his to find.

A soft yet firm reply.

Her eyes were fixed, her smile was sweet,
He never had a chance.

They walked for hours along the sand
His mind was still entranced.

And hours turned into days.

A life they planned with thoughts sincere,
Together they found dreams

As time passed by, those dreams came true,
Their life complete. It seemed...

The world was theirs.

They lived their life, for all to see,
How special was their time.

One day there was a flirtatious wink,
She had no plans in mind...

Dan Elliott

Is It Ever Too Late?

The search has been too long to find my one.
Through countless trials run a whole life long;
Endless alleys darkened by what I've done.
Though the crimes were few, penalties were strong
I hope for love through this desperate state.
Perhaps it was wretched foolishness to wait.

My time is not eternity, its gone.
No warmth is shared by my perfect lover,
She dwells in a land that is mine alone.
Captive in my mind she'll see no other.
Her life could well be lonelier than mine.
For her there is no escaping this shrine.

I doubt that she has been created yet.
Rocks and trees, birds and bees, but not my love.
For if she were here wouldn't we have met?
A ship in storming weather seeks a cove.
I'll probably find her if it's not too late,
Probably at eternity's bright gate

Poetry by Dan Weaver

Pristine Punctuality

pristine punctuality,
peopled portholes,
and pretty promenades
mark my ship.

Futures

the integrity of
men at work,
winter-spring
mornings,
under cool blue
skies.
barren trees
give fruit to
bricks and
mortar.
more hod, please,
shoveler.
slowly tiers
rise.
buildings grow
barren,
give fruit to
mortar board
futures.

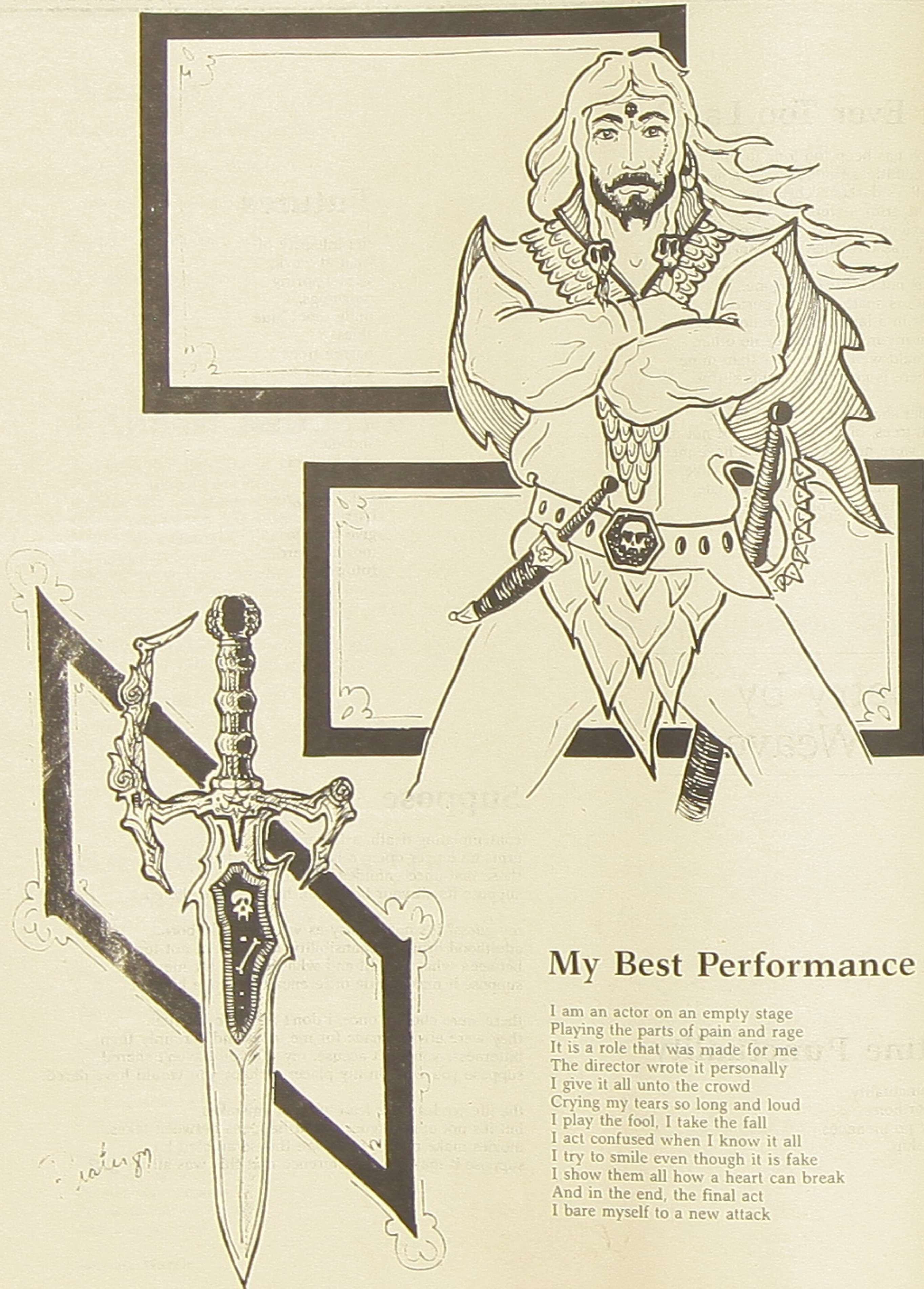
Suppose

contemplating death, a frozen shore.
arms no longer open; a bar upon the door
those that once enfolded you are lost.
suppose its all your fault; you haven't paid the cost.

my guess? it's not as easy as when a child born.
adulthood brings responsibility. tell me I'm not torn,
between what is right and what is right for me.
suppose it makes little difference to anyone but He.

there were choices once; i don't remember when.
they were always made for me, now and certainly then.
bitterness? you can't accuse. my life you haven't shared.
suppose you were in my place; perhaps you would have dared.

the life we lead has lead to some mistakes,
but it's not ours to guess what happens between takes.
movies make more sense than this scrambled lot.
suppose it makes any difference that this was all we got?



My Best Performance

I am an actor on an empty stage
 Playing the parts of pain and rage
 It is a role that was made for me
 The director wrote it personally
 I give it all unto the crowd
 Crying my tears so long and loud
 I play the fool, I take the fall
 I act confused when I know it all
 I try to smile even though it is fake
 I show them all how a heart can break
 And in the end, the final act
 I bare myself to a new attack



Loneliness No. 15

It is a frightening thing
to be truly alone
Love begins to become
just a memory for a dream.
You remember longingly
so you try to forget
But that only makes it hurt.
Time becomes a reality
and you begin to feel your age.
Confusion as to the reasons
why others are not alone
Are you the only one lost
becomes your only real question.
Everything is then nothing
while nothing is not enough.
It is a frightening thing
to be truly alone.

Artwork and Poetry by Mike Prater



(continued from page 2)

the dial by their own volition. There was no real point in talking to her, trying to explain that after tonight I might be nothing but a memory. But there is a longing that accompanies the knowledge that one might be about to die. It is a longing to once again know that you are not really alone, a longing to hear a familiar voice which brings a smile onto a face that may not smile again. But even as I heard her pick up the phone, I knew that the call was one of little worth. She would not understand even if she would believe me.

"Hello?"

Slowly I set the phone back down, hearing her voice until the final click cut her off. I was on my own. I was one of the best of the Shadow Warriors, and my ability had kept me alive up until that point. It would have to again.

I turned on the lights to make it look like I was home and human, and left.

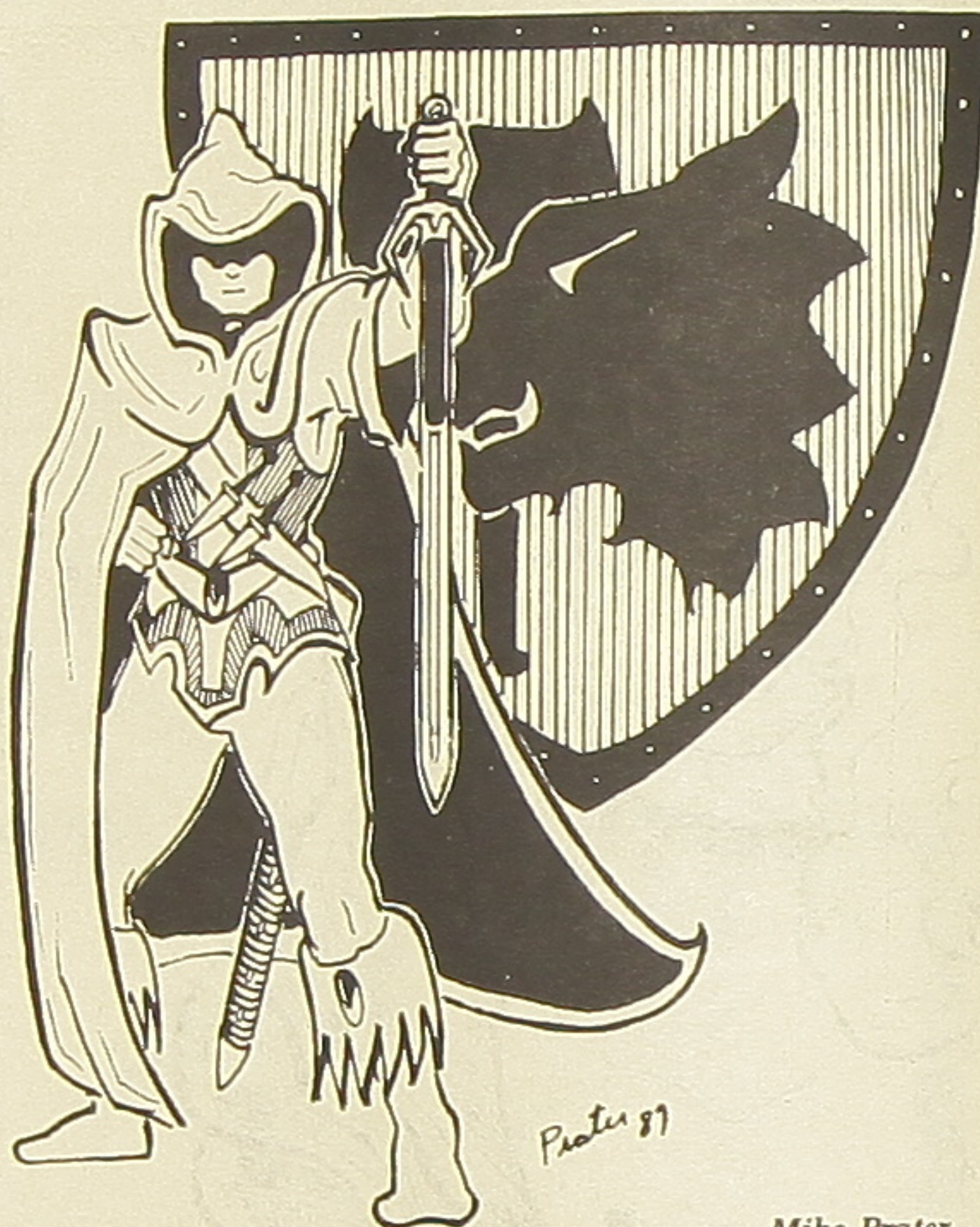
I drove through the streets for a long time. The glare of the street lights passed by and over me, flashes of a sign, warning me that the ride was almost over. Faces turned to see me pass. I heard their voices, too, the humans which walked in my domain. They called out about the blackness of my car, they called out about the dark tinted windows. I don't believe they would have acknowledged my passing if they knew that I could hear their hearts beating within their chests. I don't think they would have even looked up at me if they knew that I could see the fear and the pain in their souls. No, they did not know what passed amongst them. But that is as it should be, with the hunter and the hunted.

But soon I began to pick up the spore of my own hunter. And so I quickly turned the chase into a meeting. I drove down to the darkened portion of town, watching the signs, allowing myself to feel the vibrations in the air through my lowered window. He was near, I knew, probably doing the same as I, slowly circling, keeping an eye upon the spore, looking for a good place for the kill. He was probably relishing in the thought of tasting my blood, ripping the flesh from my bones. That was his only advantage over me, and fortunately, only I knew it. Killing was not something I lived to do. Whereas my foe probably enjoyed it to a high degree. I was not a true killer anymore. Such was the curse of knowing love, and it is called caring.

Then the place of our meeting was shown to me. His car was parked outside a small bar on a corner.

I looked at the glare of the red neon beer sign for a while before I finally parked and went inside. This was not a place for killing. It was an insult to the beauty to the battle ground which we had been given. But I decided it would matter for nothing and prepared to once again look into the eyes of another of my kind.

Inside the bar it was heavy with smoke,

(continued on page 11)

Mike Prater

Vietnam: The Afterglow (A Villanelle)

I see the earth now, slowly go.
I mend my mind from blankets after day,
And alter words of God's own flow.

I tilt mountain, reverse the crow.
On wearing sun, I close that eye to say,
"I see the earth now, slowly go."

I will meet a prophet's foe
And burn the bushes in my way--
And alter words of God's own flow.

Of valley's vine, each hidden row,
I turn my face now made of clay;
I see the earth now, slowly go.

Lonely have I fought to know
That I would murder on summer's day
And alter words of God's own flow

Forgive, dear Brother, so lying low,
We hear the heart outclick its stay;
I see the earth now, slowly go,
And alter words of God's own flow.

At Mellow Mound

And we, the bleaters,
lie in the frost of day,
as sun turns in its tethered eye
in fleeting moments of its decay;
and we, the healers,
bleed so constantly still.

Neon Timesong

We stop from breathing,
and hear the woods work
on a still night;
we burn our blindness,
and stars are cities,
we drift awake,
and stalk from meadows
in their frosted sleep.

We wear the warmth of midnight crowds,
cut, and we are tied to freedom
in each other's arms;
we walk barefoot on a November street,
and flame like fireflies in a September wind.

Poetry by
Randy Scott

The Cathedral

Mourning we come
to hear the silence
in the deadlocked arm of night,
as ice now grows it flashy teeth
'tween frosted limbs
and tight-lipped towns,
impales its bittered freeze
in one synaptic bite.

On Eve Of Year-Bent Dawn

I.
As wheat fields cowered
from summer's ride,
and trees bowed in cool night
to hear cows croon,
and lovers walked stars to dream
on wooded farms with arms folded,
I sang as a child.

II.
But be with me, this child again,
on this the eve of year-bent dawn,
as sea slides through huddled bays
and dancers thrust past
fog to grave
in some lonely city
stirring in the sea,
and I, simply singing to a storm.

III.
As sun screws in, chalk clouds relapse,
leaves whirl to burn
the green grass brown,
moon shifts its paralytic eye
to flick each wave
and rock the dark stars down.

April 23, 1985

by Cara Walker

As she looks around the room, searching for the one whose voice is calling her name, her eyes pass over a familiar face. She looks back, almost certain she's mistaken. But there she is. Looking at her with those deep green eyes that seem to be feeling so much. So much hurt and frustration and at this moment fear. Fear because the one he is calling out to should be so uncaring, even to the point of turning around and walking away. But he waits, feeling the anxiety deep down in his soul, hoping she still cares, hoping he hadn't ruined things forever. But her eyes hold something he doesn't quite understand. It's been so long but she still seems to be longing for him. It is the same look he pushed out of his mind so many years ago, but now, after all the unhappiness, he is finally noticing that look. The look she doesn't know she is giving. She sees him standing there, blonde hair blowing in the wind. My god, what does he want? Her heart races as they step closer. They finally meet and both smile casually, hiding all emotion. She asks how he is doing, and in time, why he is here. Her last question is so hard for him to answer. It's come time for pride to be set aside and his heart's feeling told. He wants them to be alone so he asks her to walk with him. The day is so beautiful. The sun is shining, the wind is softly blowing. The kind of day people have a picnic in the park or sit and talk on a park bench. That is where they ended up. On a bench in the park just watching the people, not talking for the longest time. Finally, all he has had bottled up inside comes pouring out leaving his heart wide open for hurt and reaction. All of what he is saying is too much for her. She feels she must move around, let it all

sink in. She had waited so long to hear those words, and now she couldn't believe it. They begin walking, he still talking, trying to explain. They end up in her apartment where she offers him of all things wine. Cheap wine, left over from her and her roommates' celebration the night before. It tasted sweet and refreshing. They sat again with the stereo softly playing. They both say nervously and unsure. He finishes his wine and goes to the kitchen to set his glass down. She goes to the window to watch the sun going down. Finally, he walks over to her, reaches for her glass and sets it down. Slowly she turns to face him, and tells her he loves her like no other he has ever known, no matter how blind he'd been. Both are overwhelmed with feeling. He pulls

her to him and holds her. Holds her so tight because he knows he may never have another chance. Her arms come around him and he hears her soft cry of submission. With that small gesture, all his held back emotion comes pouring out and he whispers over and over how much he loves her. She pulls away far enough to look into his eyes and see the truth and love he is holding for her. She knows, always has, how much she loves him. After all this time she is able to look into his eyes and tell him she loves him so much. That what he needed so desperately. He takes her chin in hand, lifts her head and kisses her beautiful lips. Both are carried away on a cloud as they spend the night together that begins the rest of the days and nights of their lives together.

Prater
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Mike Prater



The little boy

The little boy peers out the cracked glass
 he is watching down the deserted street for his mother
 he is bored with waiting but there's nothing else to do
 the two room apartment is run down and dirty
 there is no television or radio
 only the old, worn sofa in the corner which his mother sleeps on
 and his blankets are on the floor right next to her
 he likes to be next to her, at those times he feels safe
 and then there's the table in the kitchen and the two broken down chairs
 there's hardly any food in the old refrigerator
 so the little boy watches for her, hoping she'll be there soon
 but as he watches, his blue eyes grow sleepy and his little body heavy
 he leaves the window to curl up in the old dirty blanket and sleeps.

Cara Walker

Being young is wonderful

Being young is wonderful
 we go and we come
 we laugh and we cry
 we search for answers
 and think we know what is best
 youth is the best part of life
 it is the time to make yourself
 to form what you want to be
 to understand yourself
 and your feelings
 these are the carefree days
 ones we will never forget
 ones we take for granted
 but ones that go by so fast
 and others will never match
 right now there's no responsibility
 nothing holding us back
 we can be anything
 and everything
 we ever desire
 being young is wonderful
 we learn many things
 but as we look upon the world
 growing old and slowing down,
 is no where in sight.

Cara Walker

Fast Food

Greetings to thee,
 Oh, great eating spree;
 Grant me thy products
 Of old deep fried clucks.

So I may go,
 And I may show
 The wonders of fast food
 To a friend in his mood.

He will thank my devotion
 With grand indigestion
 And burp from the grease
 That was bought with much ease.

Mark Mulik

(continued from page 8)

noise, and humanity. The creatures stood about, sucking poisons of various kinds into their bodies, committing the one sin that my kind can never understand, that is the sin of lying. Dishonesty is unnecessary in the hunt. You either succeed or fail. When you fail, the knowledge that you will succeed soon because you have to is always there. A lie is a concept we have never seen a use for.

I passed through them, ignoring the eyes of women, the glares of the men. I was seeking a special pair of eyes, one which bore the mark as did mine.

And then, sitting at a table on the far side of the room I saw a pair like mine. Ice grey, and cold, having seen death too many times to hold any form of life. To these I was drawn, and I pulled up a chair and sat down at his table, showing no fear as was the way of countless times before.

He was young, much younger than myself, barely a hundred, a hundred and twenty years old. His hair was as dark as mine, and he possessed the lean, well toned build of our kind. His nails, I noticed, he did not trim much. They were a good inch long, sharp and strong. His skin already bore the scars of many clashes, and it was obvious that my opponent was all I feared him to be.

"I have searched for you Erron Petarr," he whispered, only loud enough for my own ears to hear, not the ears of men, "and I have found you."

"And now will you kill me, claim the rights of the kill?" I asked, using the same whisper.

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He nodded and smiled. I met his smiling gaze with my own and soon his faded.

"What is the name of him who seeks me?" I asked, unzipping my coat. I saw him stiffen at the movement and realized that he was prepared to attack me before the eyes of the humans. He was as much foolhardy as he was experienced, and such a combination meant only that innocent humans would die.

"I am Gerrod Rezmurr."

I could do nothing but look at him for a while, feeling the pure unbased hatred he had for me through the scent of his skin. Fear for my own life faded as pity for his began to surface.

"Listen to the words which I speak, Gerrod Rezmurr, you are a fierce Shadow Warrior, I can see. We have no quarrel which has not been paid for in blood a thousand times. You are young, and I do not wish to try and kill you," I said, slowly, making sure he heard every word as if there was any question that he would. For a moment I thought the light I saw in his eyes was a light of agreement, but then a snarl crossed his features.

"You will not deny me the kill, Erron Petarr, with your human stinking words and thoughts. You know what we are. You know that we cannot lie, even to ourselves. You want the kill just as much as I do."

"You are wrong..." I started.

"Then you have become slow and weak, and if I do not kill you then another will. I would be doing you a favor."

"Perhaps I am doing you a favor. Perhaps this is a chance you might thank me for later."

"You do not frighten me," he stated, "I am your equal and perhaps your better. Death by your hand is not a fear which would make me abandon the kill."

I smiled then, a very human smile. One of pity and understanding. It was not that the words came from his heart, as much as they were the only words he knew. There would be no chance to avoid the bloodshed. It had been shed a thousand generations before us.

"Outside then, young one."

He nodded his agreement and together we got up and walked out a side door into an alley. I stopped just long enough to twist the door handle into a bizarre, unopenable shape.

He turned to face me, a long knife with a curved edge in his hand.

"It begins," he stated.

My only answer was to draw my own blade from the pocket of my coat and nod.

He covered the space between us in one furious leap, the knife slicing through the air with an audible hiss. I ducked under him, rolling forward and away from where he would land. But he twisted in mid-air, propelled himself off of the wall with a kick and somersaulted in front of me.

I double armed the stab for my throat, caught his blade arm with my free one, then blew out precious wind as his own free fist caught me in the belly.

Another two fists and an elbow beat against my head before I could desperately send a spinning kick into his own abdomen. He struck up against the wall hard, leaving a red smear upon the bricks behind him. I staggered back, then gave up on trying to outdistance him, and launched myself straight up, flipping once and twisting so as to gain a weak purchase upon a drain pipe.

I ripped the blade free, and spun to take his final attack.

"NO!" I hissed, but it was to no avail. His long sharp claws were stretched out for my own unprotected throat, and I knew what had to be done.

"Don't try and run from me!" he screamed below me. I heard him follow me up the face of the wall, and so when he reached for my leg I let go of my ledge. As I dropped by him I saw the look of surprise in his eyes, I heard his knife slice through the flesh on my chest, and I felt him pull free from the wall as I drug him down with me.

We landed in the middle of the alley, both of us getting hurt because of the lack of balance in the fall, but somehow I got onto my feet first. I kicked him hard in the face, sending him rolling down the alley, towards the street. I followed him then with the speed which is our gift. I kicked him again, and again, each time just as he desperately tried to lift up and get away, each time he rolled a little further towards the street.

Finally he did get up, and swung wide with his bloody blade at my face. But he was weakened then, and the strength of youth was failing before the endurance of experience.

I ducked his slash easily, following it with a left to his ribs. I felt ribs crack, I smelled his blood as he spit it out onto my back. I punched him again, this time to the groin, and before he could double over, lept up and kicked him in the head again. He cartwheeled backwards to land in a heap in the street outside the alley.

The blood from the cut on my chest was flowing freely, but I was not afraid of bleeding to death. It was not overly serious, though very painful. But the pain was cut by the feeling of relief which was sweeping over me. Gerrod was still breathing, though unconscious.

There would be no killing this night. For once the hunt had ended without a kill. And happily, I did not have to claim the rights of the kill.

But happiness is perhaps a human emotion, because it weakens the senses. My relief was so strong at not having to kill the younger one that it was not until too late that I saw his body bathed in the glare of headlights and heard the roar of an engine approaching, too fast to stop.

I had not killed to claim my prize—but it was still mine. Gerrod's life would not be taken from me by a human behind the wheel of an air poisoning machine.

I moved with all the speed I had left within me. I grabbed Gerrod's unmoving form by the arms, and looked up into headlights barely ten feet away. A violent pull upon him, and twisting dive for myself, and we both rolled clear of the pavement, even though I felt something massive clip the heel of my shoe.

The car honked loudly, but didn't stop. It's driver apparently uncaring to the tragedy he had almost perpetrated. I watched it for a moment then got to my feet.

Then pain struck me in the right shoulder as Gerrod threw his blade at my neck.

I ripped the blade free, and spun to take his final attack.

"NO!" I hissed, but it was to no avail. His long sharp claws were stretched out for my own unprotected throat, and I knew what had to be done.

I spun under him, stabbing up with his own knife. Rolling away, already knowing what I would see when I stood.

There was no reason to even touch the body, but the young one was right. I did know what I was, and our kind cannot lie, not even to ourselves.

I claimed the rights of the kill, quickly, quietly, the ceremony itself revolting me to a level which likened itself to a wound. One that would not heal for a long time.

But as I drove away from the darkened part of town, the taste of blood still warm in my mouth, my throat, my belly, I could not help but remember his lifeless body, drained of life. He had been so young. But I was not that much older.

I knew that soon, another of our kind would find me, and he would probably not be so young. I would die, he would feed off of my blood, and then someday he would meet another, and the cycle would continue.

Absent-mindedly I fingered the long canine teeth which were very visible in the half grimace I bore. They were a curse, it was true. But my life continued for a while at least. As long as I never truly succumbed to the desires and needs that my kind had long since shrugged off the physical necessity for, I would still be able to love.

Love and caring, a lesson for the most skilled hunters to know and remember.

I steered in the direction of Julie's house. There was still sometime before the sun rose, and the thought of her warm embrace made me drive all the quicker.